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Department of Religious Studies

phone 716-888-2820

May 28, 2003



Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12 Street, S.W.
Room TW 204B
Washington, D.C. 20554

Regarding: Informal comments, MB Dkt. No. 02 277;
MM Dkt. No. 01 235; MM Dkt. No. 01 317 MM Dkt.
No.00 244

Dear Secretary:

I submit the following informal comments in the above referenced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, released September 23, 2002.

I join the Diocese of Buffalo and those individuals who are concerned about the erosion of local news and public affairs programming caused by the FCC's and Congress' weakening of broadcast ownership limits. I am equally concerned about the FCC's elimination of broadcast rules which formerly had permitted the FCC and the community to monitor broadcasters to help endure that broadcasters served their community of license with programs which meet community needs and interests. In particular, in Buffalo, locally produced and locally directed religious programming, although wanted by the community, has all but disappeared, replaced by syndicated talk shows and infomercials.

I am one of the host interviewers on *Crossroads*, a weekly radio program of the Network of Religious Communities that airs at 6:00 A. M. on Sundays on a commercial station that is part of a national media enterprise. The time slot is already at the fringes of what might be considered realistic for an audience. An erosion of current rules would jeopardize even that toe-hold as the media conglomerate, Infinity Broadcasting, is given the freedom to pursue income producing programming.

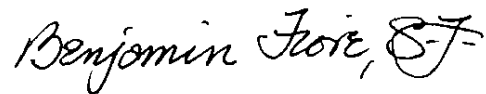
I am a supporting member of a local public radio news station and find news coverage there much more varied, thorough and editorially balanced than what is available in the print and electronic media. Further consolidation of ownership by national companies will homogenize and trivialize the news and commentary even

further. As it is, most people in Buffalo depend on the commercial media for whatever news they receive. They will be further disadvantaged by the effects of the proposed rule changes.

I urge the FCC to refrain from making changes in the current rules which)a) prohibit cross ownership of broadcast stations and newspapers in the same community; (b) limit the number of television and radio stations a single entity may own in a single community; (c) set a national ownership cap for television stations at an already overly generous 35% of households; (d) prohibit common ownership of major television dominated by the same companies that dominate television and satellite systems and the programming on those systems. The latter is a more serious concern now that those same companies are moving toward ownership of companies that provide internet access. Neither cable nor the internet (whether offered through cable or phone lines) offers meaningful alternatives to the already scarce supply of truly local news and local public affairs programs on over the air television and radio.

Thank you for your attention to these views.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin Fiore, S.J.".

Fr. Benjamin Fiore, S. J., PhD
Chair, Religious Studies Department
Religion Editor, *Polish American*
Journal
Host, *Crossroads* radio program